

The wet winters and springs give way to hot, dry summers and early falls. The fuel on the forest floors grows with the spring rains and then becomes more and more flammable later in the year. The wildfire season is usually in the late summer and early fall when fuels have dried and precipitation is low.

**TABLE 1**

| <b>MONTHLY AVERAGES 1997 - 2001</b>                                 |                |                |                |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|   | <b>Maximum</b> | <b>Minimum</b> | <b>Total</b>   |
|   | <b>Temp.</b>   | <b>Temp.</b>   | <b>Precip.</b> |
| <b>MONTH</b>  | <b>(°F)</b>    | <b>(°F)</b>    | <b>(in.)</b>   |
| <b>January</b>  | 36.8           | 25.8           | 4.2            |
| <b>February</b>   | 41.0           | 27.1           | 2.9            |
| <b>March</b>  | 48.5           | 30.9           | 2.3            |
| <b>April</b>  | 55.9           | 35.0           | 2.1            |
| <b>May</b>  | 65.6           | 43.6           | 2.6            |
| <b>June</b>   | 71.2           | 49.5           | 1.7            |
| <b>July</b>   | 81.8           | 56.0           | 0.9            |
| <b>August</b>   | 84.4           | 56.4           | 0.7            |
| <b>September</b>  | 74.8           | 48.4           | 0.9            |
| <b>October</b>  | 58.3           | 38.1           | 2.2            |
| <b>November</b>   | 45.9           | 32.2           | 3.3            |
| <b>December</b>   | 36.5           | 26.2           | 3.5            |
| <b>Annual</b>   | 58.1           | 38.8           | 26.3           |
| <b>Source: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration 2000</b> |                |                |                |

## **Fire History**

Wildfires are normally a natural ecological event that helps rejuvenate the forest by releasing seeds from pine cones or activating germination. However, as humans move into the forests to live, the risk to property and life increase and the potential for human caused fires increases. In fact, human activity is 7 times more likely to cause wildfires (see Table 2) below (U. S. Fire Administration 2000b).

The first wildland fire control program was established in 1885 (U. S. Fire Administration 2000b). Since that time the methods of control have varied from complete suppression to allowing some wildfires to burn as part of the natural forces. The changes in policy through the years have been a direct result of the variation in risk associated with humans living or recreating in these wildlands. Questions rise over two basic areas: suppression and reduction of fuels. Should homeowners be required to create survivable space and build with survivable materials or should fire fighters be required to attack fires in dangerous locations to save homes? Should fuels be reduced by controlled